

# Gracie's Treasure

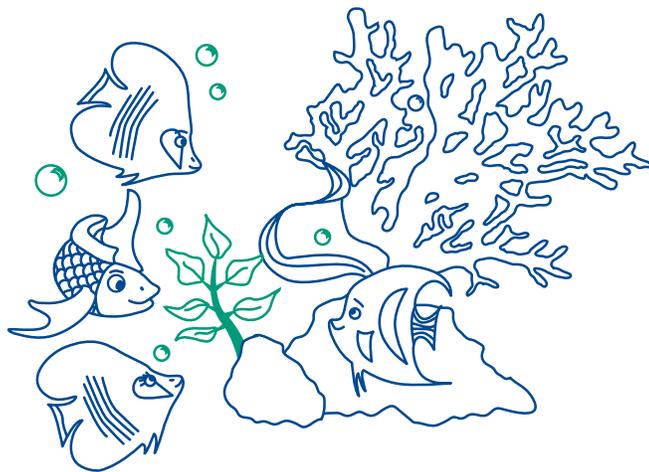
It was a beautiful day on the coral reef. The sun came streaming down through the water, creating pools of color as it met the many coral colonies and fishes. “Just the day for an adventure!” thought Gracie, as she looked around for her friends. She quickly found Benji and Belinda Butterflyfish and Angie Angelfish. Gracie began to tell them of her plan to go on an adventure to her favorite secret place.

Gracie led the way, and soon the four friends were swimming to a deeper part of the sea.

“Are we there yet?” asked Benji, impatiently.

“Almost!” replied Gracie.

She looked ahead, seeking her secret place on the bottom of the sea. Finally, she saw what she was looking for. It had large wooden beams, a great rusty anchor, and many hidden spots to play in. “It’s a ship!” said Angie Angelfish with wonder. They swam quickly under and over the beams of the ship, playing tag and hide-and-seek.



When they grew hungry, Gracie took them to her most secret treasure—a wonderful plant growing from ancient seeds that spilled on the bottom of the ocean when the ship went down. It was the best tasting thing that Gracie had ever eaten, and this was the first time that she had shared it with anyone. Angie thought it tasted sweet and sugary. Benji thought it was spicy. Belinda enjoyed licking the salt water from the plant and getting two tastes in one.

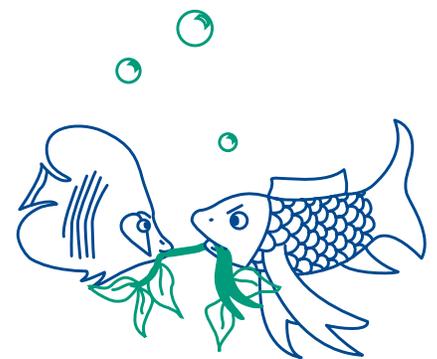
After they had eaten, Benji decided they should take the plant back with them to the reef. Gracie was willing to share with her friends, but she didn’t want everyone to know about her secret treasure. Benji and Gracie continued to argue and even began tugging on the plant from opposite sides. Belinda and Angie both tried to get them to stop, but they wouldn’t listen. Then they all heard a soft, familiar voice say, “Where is your treasure?”

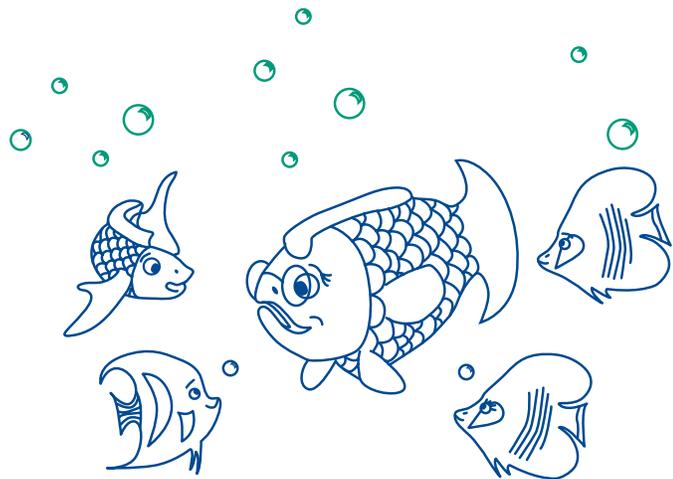
Gracie and Benji were so surprised to see that their teacher, Old Codfish, had joined them that they both dropped the plant at the same time and spun off in two different directions. After they returned to the group, they found that Old Codfish was about to begin one of his wonderful stories, so they forgot about the plant for the moment and settled down to listen.

“This reminds me of a story that I heard as a young fish back when I lived in the Mediterranean Sea,” began the wise teacher. “This was about another ship and happened long ago when the Christians were just beginning.”

Gracie remembered that last year Old Codfish had told her about the early Christians when she had found the stone with a fish on it. She was anxious to know more about these people who knew how to share and followed Jesus.

“This story is about a Christian named Paul who was taken on a ship as a prisoner. He had a treasure, too, but it may be different from yours. There was a storm on the sea, and the waves were getting higher and higher. The crew were afraid and began throwing overboard everything they didn’t need.”





“Did they throw out Paul’s treasure?” asked Belinda, horrified.

“No, Paul’s treasure was not part of the cargo,” replied Old Codfish. “The storm grew worse and the crew grew more afraid, so they threw over the side all the parts of the ship for loading and unloading cargo.”

“That wasn’t Paul’s treasure, was it?” interrupted Benji.

“No, Paul’s treasure was not part of the ship. Then Paul called the crew together and told them that God would protect them as long as they stayed together. Some of the men didn’t listen to him and started to get in the lifeboat because they thought they would be safer. Paul asked the captain to stop them from making this mistake. So the crew set the lifeboat adrift before the other men could reach it.”

“I guess the lifeboat wasn’t Paul’s treasure,” said Angie with a laugh.

“You’re right,” continued Old Codfish. “Paul gathered the crew together and told them that they should eat and prepare themselves to watch God save them. They sat down to a good meal and then threw the remaining food over the side of the ship.

“So even the food was not their treasure!” said Gracie with amazement.

“No, by now they knew that they had to depend on God and each other for their very lives. Ahead they saw an island, and the ship ran aground on a reef, much as your secret ship, Gracie, but every person on board made it to the shore. So where was Paul’s treasure?” asked Old Codfish.

The others looked at each other, puzzled.

“Well,” said Benji, “we know it wasn’t the cargo, the ship, the lifeboat, or the food. What else is there?”

“There were the people,” began Gracie. “They all survived because they worked together and they believed God’s promise to save them.”

“Yes,” replied Old Codfish, “their treasure was their lives and their trust in the God who loves them.”

“I feel pretty silly arguing over a plant now, no matter how good it tastes,” said Gracie.

“I wonder where your real treasure is, Gracie,” said Old Codfish with a smile. Gracie thought about this all the way back to the reef. Perhaps she is still thinking about it today.

**For younger children:**

1. What do you think is Gracie’s treasure?
2. In Old Codfish’s story, what was Paul’s treasure?
3. Draw a picture of your treasure. What is most important to you? Think about how you might share this with others.

**For older children:**

1. Read Paul’s shipwreck story in Acts 27. Why were the people so frightened? Why do you think the crew and soldiers listened to Paul?
2. Read Jesus’ words about treasure (Matthew 6:19–21). Make a list of what is most important to you and rank them. How is your ranking different after reading Jesus’ words than it might have been before?
3. Look at the treasure map in the OGHS packet. What are the various treasures that these people need? How will your money help them get the treasured things they need?

